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ABSTRACT

The Situational Attitude Scale-Simplified (SAS-S), a simplified form of the Situational Attitude Scale (SAS), was used to measure the attitudes of 132 incoming white freshmen toward blacks. The study showed that the simplified form yielded the same established pattern of results as the regular SAS. This indicates that the SAS-S would be appropriate for use with individuals who have less than a college education. White students tended to have generally negative attitudes toward blacks. However, situations that involved relatively close personal contact elicited the most strongly negative feelings toward blacks, whereas situations that involve relatively distant personal contact and service roles elicited strongly positive feelings toward blacks. Implications for future research were discussed. (Author)

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A STUDY OF A SIMPLIFIED VERSION OF THE SITUATIONAL ATTITUDE SCALE (SAS)

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A STUDY OF A SIMPLIFIED VERSION OF THE SITUATIONAL ATTITUDE SCALE (SAS)

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SUMMARY

The Situational Attitude Scale - Simplified (SAS-S), a simplified form of the Situational Attitude Scale (SAS), was used to measure the attitudes of 132 incoming white freshmen toward blacks. The study showed that the simplified form yielded the same established pattern of results as the regular SAS. This indicates that the SAS-S would be appropriate for use with individuals who have less than a college education. White students tended to have generally negative attitudes toward blacks. However, situations that involve relatively close personal contact elicited the most strongly negative feelings toward blacks, whereas situations that involve relatively distant personal contact and service roles elicited strongly positive feelings toward blacks. Implications for future research were discussed.

In recent years much attention has been focused on prejudicial attitudes, for race relations continues as a major social problem in the United States. The assessment of the attitudes of one race toward another appears critical in a better understanding of race relations (Shaw and Wright, 1967).

The Situational Attitude Scale (SAS) was developed to measure the attitudes of whites toward blacks (Sedlacek and Brooks, 1970, 1972) and to eliminate or reduce the methodological problems in other measures. The SAS has been used in a variety of studies with college student populations (e.g., Sedlacek and Brooks 1970, 1972; Brooks and Sedlacek, 1971; Chaples, Sedlacek and Brooks, 1972; Sedlacek, Brooks and Mindus, 1973). The SAS has been used with non-college student groups (e.g., Ball, 1971; Sedlacek and Brooks, 1972; Whaples, 1974) but the question remains as to whether the level of comprehension required to understand the SAS would preclude its use among many non-college trained groups. In the present investigation, the Situational Attitude Scale - Simplified (SAS-S) has been developed, in which the appropriate word dimensions have been changed and simplified, in the direction of a lower level of required reading comprehension.

The purpose of this study was to measure the attitudes of white incoming university freshmen toward blacks, using the SAS-S, and to compare these results with those of administrations of the SAS. If the simplified form yields the same pattern of results as the regular SAS, then the SAS-S could be said to function in the same way as the SAS and the individual words used are relatively unimportant. In fact, previous work with the SAS indicates that the general positivity or negativity of a word is more important than the specific word used (Sedlacek and Brooks 1970, 1972).

Method

The SAS-S was developed to measure the attitudes of whites toward blacks.

Situations from the SAS were employed in this study (see Table 1). The situations represented instances where race might be a variable in reactions to the situation.

The SAS contains 10 bipolar semantic differential scales (Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum, 1957) for each situation, making a total of 100 items. Fifty-eight of the SAS items were replaced with more simplified expressions of positivity and negativity (see Table 2). Aside from those 58 items, the SAS and SAS-S were identical including the positive and negative poles for each item.

Administration

The SAS-S was administered to a representative sample of 132 incoming white freshmen (60% male, 40% female) at the University of Maryland during a summer orientation session. The questionnaires were completed anonymously. Black students were eliminated from the sample after the administration by asking students to indicate race on their response sheets or by noting those of black students as they were turned in. The median scale value (scale 0 to 4; 2=median) was assigned to any missing item response, provided there were 10 items or less blank on a questionnaire.

Trained graduate students administered the SAS-S. Questionnaires were distributed so that each student had an approximately equal chance to receive Form A or B. Subjects had no knowledge that different forms existed. If subjects had questions, they were requested to come to the front of the room and not to verbalize the question and disturb others. Administration time was 20 to 30 minutes.

Results and Discussion

Table 2 shows the results of the t tests between Form A and Form B (.05 level). Thirty-seven of the 100 items showed significant differences between forms.

Sakoda, Cohen and Beall (1954) stated that about 9 tests out of 100 made would be significant at the .05 level due to chance. Hence, there was a strong indication that the insertion of the word "black" into each situation led subjects to respond differently to the two forms.

The insertion of the word "black" into five situations apparently led respondents to feel more negatively about each situation than if race were not mentioned. Form B means were consistently more negative in situations I (new family next door), V (friend becomes engaged), VII (person joins social group) and X (only person standing).

More specifically, using the bipolar terms from the SAS-S, subjects responded that they tended to feel: bad, angry, unfriendly, nervous, sad, "not fun" and "no smile" toward a black family moving next door; mad, sad, not fine, bad, anger, hopeless, unexcited, wrong and "not nice" toward a friend becoming engaged to a black; sad, worse, not pleased, "don't understand," not fine and not OK toward a black person joining their social group; and "fear" and "not calm" toward being the only person standing in an all black bus.

However, in situations III (man selling magazines) and VI (stopped by policeman), the Form B item means were consistently more positive, which indicated that in these situations whites felt more positively toward blacks than if there were no reference to race. Subjects felt: happy, glad, pleased, "not mad," "no bother," and "friend" toward a black magazine salesman; and calm, "trust," safe, OK, better and "not fair" toward a black policeman.

In situations II (man raped woman), IV (corner of loitering men), VIII (youngster steals) and IX (campus demonstration) only one significant difference was found and it was in the negative direction.

Past results of the regular SAS have repeatedly indicated three conclusions: (1) white students tended to have negative attitudes toward blacks in most situations; (2) situations which involve relatively close personal contact elicited the most strongly negative feelings toward blacks; and (3) situations which involve relatively distant personal contact and which involve socially acceptable service roles elicited positive feelings toward blacks.

The conclusion of this study is that the simplified form (SAS-S) yields the same pattern of results as the regular SAS. White students tend to have generally negative attitudes toward blacks. Situations that involve relatively close personal contact: I (new family next door), V (friend becomes engaged) and VII (person joins social group) elicit the most strongly negative feelings toward blacks. Contrastingly, situations that involve relatively distant personal contact and that involve socially acceptable and reinforced service roles: III (black magazine salesman) and VI (black policeman) elicit positive feelings toward blacks.

Therefore, the Situational Attitude Scale - Simplified (SAS-S) appears to function the same as the regular SAS, and the specific words used are less important than their positive or negative connotations. Also, since the response pattern is the same, it seems justified to adopt the simplified form, for this instrument allows administration to both college and less well educated populations.

However, additional research appears to be needed before the SAS and SAS-S are considered equivalent. The administration of the SAS-S to non-college populations is necessary to see if results are limited to University of Maryland students, or if they are more general.

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TABLE 1

Instructions and Situations from the Situational Attitude Scale*

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*The Situational Attitude Scale is copyrighted and available from Natresources, Inc., 520 N. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60611.

TABLE 2

Means, Standard Deviations and t tests for Forms A and B of the SAS-S[a]

ITEM NO.	SITUATIONS[b] BIPOLAR ADJECTIVE DIMENSION	FORM A(N=64) MEAN	S.D.	FORM B(N=68) MEAN	S.D.	t[c]
	I. NEW FAMILY NEXT DOOR					
1	good-bad	0.94	0.81	1.68	1.08	4.40
2	safe-unsafe	1.05	0.93	1.26	0.93	1.34
3	angry-not angry	3.61	0.80	2.78	1.30	4.34
4	friendly-unfriendly	0.61	0.74	1.00	0.97	2.57
5	sympathetic-not sympathetic	1.88	1.26	1.91	1.33	0.16
6	nervous-calm	2.84	1.15	2.40	1.23	2.14
7	happy-sad	1.14	0.92	1.82	0.95	4.16
* 8	poor-rich	2.98	1.05	2.73	1.36	1.18
* 9	fun-not fun	1.30	0.84	1.88	1.06	3.46
*10	no smile-smile	2.73	0.95	2.32	1.10	2.24
	II. MAN RAPED WOMAN					
11	affection-disgust	3.63	0.65	3.71	0.60	0.60
*12	bad-good	3.50	0.75	3.51	0.70	0.12
13	happy-sad	3.45	0.75	3.59	0.79	1.00
14	friendly-hostile	3.02	0.91	3.15	0.84	0.85
*15	not involved-involved	1.70	1.28	1.82	1.25	0.54
*16	hope-hopeless	2.14	1.07	2.28	0.90	0.80
*17	no problem-problem	2.78	0.98	2.62	0.89	1.00
18	injure-kill	1.49	1.07	1.44	1.24	0.26
19	safe-fearful	2.66	1.16	2.62	1.11	0.19
*20	sorry-not sorry	2.76	1.05	2.64	1.14	0.62
	III. MAN SELLING MAGAZINES					
21	relaxed-startled	2.25	1.27	2.04	1.40	0.88
*22	happy-sad	3.25	0.95	2.54	1.30	3.51
*23	excited-not excited	2.91	1.16	2.66	1.15	1.21
24	glad-angered	2.34	0.64	2.13	0.54	2.00
25	pleased-annoyed	2.89	0.79	2.54	0.87	2.41
*26	not mad-mad	2.53	1.22	1.94	1.42	2.52
*27	no bother-bother	1.83	1.13	1.40	1.13	2.18
28	afraid-secure	2.05	1.14	1.93	1.14	0.61
29	friend-enemy	2.13	0.80	1.76	0.83	2.53
*30	not protected-protected	2.22	1.17	2.18	0.98	0.22
	IV. CORNER OF LOITERING MEN					
31	relaxed-tensed	3.23	0.95	3.29	0.94	0.36
32	pleased-angered	2.44	0.73	2.35	0.70	0.67
*33	good-bad	2.27	1.14	2.09	1.07	0.92
34	smarter-dumber	1.52	0.90	1.44	0.95	0.46
35	whiter-blacker	1.63	0.81	1.03	1.04	3.61
*36	mad-not mad	2.86	1.10	2.81	1.07	0.26
37	safe-unsafe	2.83	1.01	3.01	1.01	1.05
38	friendly-unfriendly	2.50	1.08	2.24	1.06	1.41
39	excited-unexcited	2.17	1.14	1.87	1.20	1.49
*40	not important-important	1.86	1.16	1.99	1.21	0.61

[a] Scale A to E (Numerical equivalent, 0 to 4)
[b] See Table 1 for complete situation.
[c] All t values larger than 1.98 are significant beyond .05 (2-tailed test).
* Item altered from original SAS.

TABLE 2

Means, Standard Deviations and t tests for Forms A and B of the SAS-S[a]
(Continued)

ITEM NO.	SITUATIONS[b] BIPOLAR ADJECTIVE DIMENSION	FORM A(N=64) MEAN	S.D.	FORM B(N=68) MEAN	S.D.	t[c]
	V. FRIEND BECOMES ENGAGED					
*41	not mad-mad	1.45	1.11	2.30	1.33	3.91
42	happy-sad	0.84	0.95	1.56	1.40	5.09
*43	fine-not fine	0.38	0.80	1.19	1.30	4.28
*44	good-bad	0.75	0.90	1.81	0.96	6.48
*45	anger-joy	3.25	0.85	2.09	0.95	7.34
46	secure-fearful	1.11	1.03	1.32	1.05	1.17
47	hopeful-hopeless	0.64	0.99	1.18	1.24	2.72
48	excited-unexcited	0.56	0.85	1.50	1.16	5.25
49	right-wrong	0.98	0.98	1.64	1.36	3.15
*50	not nice-nice	3.42	0.90	2.25	1.21	6.26
	VI. STOPPED BY POLICEMAN					
51	calm-nervous	3.47	0.93	2.41	1.57	4.62
*52	trust-no trust	1.77	1.20	0.75	1.01	5.25
53	afraid-safe	1.28	1.30	2.78	1.39	6.32
54	friendly-unfriendly	1.22	1.18	0.96	1.09	1.32
*55	not mad-mad	0.95	1.07	0.72	1.03	1.27
*56	bad-good	2.27	1.29	2.59	1.25	1.45
*57	honest-not honest	0.33	0.59	0.37	0.71	0.39
*58	OK-not OK	0.92	0.87	0.59	0.88	2.17
*59	worse-better	1.48	0.97	1.90	0.78	2.67
*60	not fair-fair	2.22	0.80	1.96	0.70	1.99
	VII. PERSON JOINS SOCIAL GROUP					
61	warm-cold	0.77	0.82	1.06	1.03	1.79
62	sad-happy	3.14	0.73	2.71	1.03	2.77
*63	better-worse	1.59	0.68	1.87	0.62	2.41
*64	mad-not mad	3.08	1.08	3.43	0.97	1.93
*65	pleased-not pleased	0.83	0.74	1.38	1.13	3.30
*66	understand-don't understand	0.78	0.89	1.32	1.37	2.66
*67	bad-good	2.77	1.01	2.96	1.08	1.04
*68	not fine-fine	2.52	0.71	2.07	0.94	3.01
*69	OK-not OK	0.88	0.76	1.37	1.24	2.72
*70	fear-no fear	2.92	0.85	2.69	1.33	1.17
	VIII. YOUNGSTER STEALS					
*71	surprise-no surprise	2.80	1.27	2.63	1.17	0.74
72	sad-happy	0.78	0.91	0.75	0.95	0.19
*73	good-bad	2.50	1.22	2.43	1.32	0.33
74	close-distant	2.03	1.21	2.38	1.13	1.71
*75	understand-don't understand	1.69	1.26	1.46	1.13	1.10
*76	friend-enemy	2.58	1.28	2.25	1.46	1.36
*77	concern-no concern	1.25	1.15	1.26	1.39	0.07
*78	feeling-no feeling	1.67	1.32	1.78	1.37	0.45
*79	true-false	1.83	1.04	1.75	1.08	0.42
*80	hope-hopeless	2.00	1.10	1.68	1.18	1.61

[a]Scale A to E (Numerical equivalent, 0 to 4)
[b]See Table 1 for complete situation.
[c]All t values larger than 1.98 are significant beyond .05 (2-tailed test).
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Means, Standard Deviations and t tests for Forms A and B of the SAS-S[a]
(Continued)

ITEM NO.	SITUATIONS[b] BIPOLAR ADJECTIVE DIMENSION	FORM A(N=64) MEAN	S.D.	FORM B(N=68) MEAN	S.D.	t[c]
	IX. CAMPUS DEMONSTRATION					
81	bad-good	1.84	1.05	1.57	1.03	1.48
*82	OK-not OK	1.45	1.22	1.84	1.26	1.75
*83	fear-no fear	1.84	0.85	1.79	0.93	0.32
84	safe-unsafe	2.17	1.10	2.25	1.14	0.40
*85	trouble-no trouble	1.66	1.23	1.50	1.17	0.74
*86	happy-sad	1.77	0.84	1.70	1.01	0.39
87	tense-calm	1.58	1.26	1.60	1.23	0.11
88	hate-love	1.98	0.67	1.93	0.76	0.47
89	wrong-right	2.03	0.81	1.88	0.92	0.98
*90	funny-serious	2.97	0.93	3.01	0.87	0.29
	X. ONLY PERSON STANDING					
*91	fear-no fear	2.33	1.20	1.74	1.26	2.75
*92	good-bad	1.09	1.18	1.34	1.15	1.20
*93	mad-not mad	2.92	1.02	2.57	1.18	1.80
*94	big-little	2.92	1.25	2.51	1.24	1.86
*95	funny-not funny	1.31	1.18	0.96	1.19	1.71
*96	calm-not calm	1.72	1.26	2.37	1.15	3.08
*97	sad-happy	2.83	1.11	2.47	1.08	1.86
*98	OK-not OK	2.34	1.39	2.67	1.27	1.40
99	hate-love	2.11	0.76	2.00	0.71	0.86
*100	right-wrong	1.28	1.27	1.27	1.10	0.06

[a]Scale A to E (Numerical equivalent, 0 to 4)
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